



Living Healthy,
Working Well

Wellness Tips

Tips for Kicking the Cigarette Habit

Cigarette smoking is one of the most addictive and widespread habits in our society. It's also one of the most deadly. Half of all smokers die prematurely -- an average of eight years earlier than nonsmokers. The good news is that half of all people who have ever smoked have successfully kicked the habit. You can, too. While giving up cigarettes is tough, it is likely to be one of the most rewarding things you ever do. Following are some proven tips to help you along the path to a smoke-free and healthier life.

Develop a Plan

Giving up cigarettes on a whim is a formula for failure. Because smoking is such a hard habit to break, it's best to make a plan to help you reach your goal. Consider the available options such as self-help groups, individual counseling, relaxation exercises, aversion techniques, hypnotism, and nicotine gum or patches. For specific information on these options, call your doctor or contact the resources listed below. You may also want to talk to successful quitters about what strategies worked for them.

Have a Support System

A support system is one of the most important tools in giving up smoking. Ask your family, friends and co-workers for their support and patience. Explain that you may be irritable or edgy for awhile. Support programs are another valuable resource. Many hospitals offer low-cost or free programs featuring a combination of lectures, behavioral management techniques and peer support.

Quit Cold Turkey

Most former smokers kicked the habit by quitting cold turkey. Cutting back gradually just reinforces the habit, and switching to lower tar brands usually leads to smoking more cigarettes or inhaling more deeply. Once you've stopped, don't fool yourself into believing you can have "just one" cigarette. One will inevitably lead to another, and before long you'll be back to your old habit.

Be Positive

When you're tempted to light up, stop and think about the benefits you are gaining from not smoking. For example: You're breathing more easily, you no longer smell of smoke, and your senses of taste and smell are returning to normal. You're also dramatically reducing the risk of developing cancer or heart disease and, all the while, saving a sizable amount of money that you used to spend on cigarettes.

Keep Trying

Don't give up hope or worry about what others think, even if you slip. Most smokers try several times before successfully kicking the habit. Relapses are most common within the first three months of quitting because people aren't prepared for the temptations of high-risk situations such as traveling, parties, or emotional upsets. If you do slip, think about what made you start smoking again, then take steps to avoid making the same mistake next time.

Support Others Trying to Quit

Once you've quit, don't preach to others who are still smoking. Remember, you're only one puff away from a pack a day. Focus on your own recovery and stay alert to the influence of smokers around you. Let your smoking friends and relatives know that they have your support, and praise them for even the smallest efforts to quit.

Resources

American Cancer Society	1-800-227-2345
American Heart Association	1-800-242-8721
American Lung Association	1-800-586-4872
Cancer Information Service	1-800-422-6237

Sources :

Consumer Reports: The Truth About Secondhand Smoke, Part 2, Consumer Reports, January 1995.

"Fivefold Increase in Heart Risk for Some Smokers," by Lawrence K. Altman, the New York Times, August 18, 1995.

Hooked But Not Helpless, by Patricia Allison with Jack Host.

The No-Nag, No-Guilty, Do-It-Your-Own-Way Guide to Quitting Smoking, by Tom Ferguson, M.D.

Quitting Smoking: Common Errors, by Marlene M. Maheu, Ph.D., 1994.

Call Your EAP

If you or someone you care about needs help finding appropriate resources for kicking the cigarette habit, you may wish to contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP counselors are available 24 hours a day, every day of the week, to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you. Information, self-help tools, and other resources are also available online at www.MagellanAssist.com.

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